

AMENDMENTS TO THE DRAWINGS

Replacement formal drawings of Figures 1-6 are submitted concurrently herewith under a separate cover letter.

REMARKS

In view of the above amendments and the following remarks, reconsideration of the rejections contained in the Office Action of November 7, 2007 is respectfully requested.

By this Amendment, claims 29, 31-34, 36-55 and 57 have been amended, and claims 30, 35 and 56 have been cancelled. Thus, claims 29, 31-34, 36-55 and 57 are currently pending in the application. No new matter has been added by these amendments.

Replacement Figs. 1a-6 have been submitted, under separate cover, along with this amendment. In this regard, it is noted that the overall line quality of the drawings has been improved in replacement Figs. 1a-6. It is also noted that unnecessary text has been removed in replacement Fig. 2, and that reference numeral 2a has been added to replacement Figs. 1b and 1d so as to correspond with Fig. 1a. No new matter has been added by these amendments. Entry of the replacement Figs. 1a-6 is thus respectfully requested.

The entire specification and abstract have been reviewed and revised. Due to the number of revisions, the amendments to the specification and abstract have been incorporated into the attached substitute specification and abstract. For the Examiner's benefit, a marked-up copy of the specification and abstract indicating the changes made thereto is also enclosed. No new matter has been added by the revisions. Entry of the substitute specification is thus respectfully requested.

On page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 31-32, 40, 43, 48-51 and 54 under 35 U.S.C. § 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite. In particular, the Examiner asserted that the limitation "said vessel" lacks proper antecedent basis, and that the word "preferably" renders the scope of the claim indefinite. In order to address these formal rejections, it is noted that claims have been amended so as to provide proper antecedent basis for all recited limitations. It is also noted that the amended claims do not include the word "preferably." Therefore, it is respectfully submitted that the Examiner's formal rejections under § 112 are not applicable to the amended claims.

On page 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner indicated that claims 35-41, 52 and 57 contain allowable subject matter and would be allowable if rewritten in independent form

including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. Therefore, in order to place the claims in condition for allowance, it is noted that independent claim 29 has been amended to include all of the limitations of claim 35. In view of the Examiner's indication of the allowability of claim 35, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claim 29 is in condition for allowance.

On page 6 of the Office Action, the Examiner also indicated that claims 40 and 43 would be in condition for allowance if they were rewritten to overcome the rejections under § 112. As discussed above, it is noted that claims 40 and 43 have been amended so as to overcome all of the § 112 rejections.

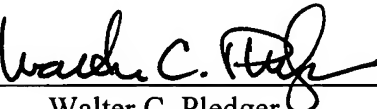
On pages 2-4 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 29, 31, 33-34, 44-47, 49-51 and 56 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by Strack (US 6,541,975). On pages 4-5 of the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 30, 32, 42, 48 and 53-55 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over Strack in view of Eidesmo (US 6,628,119). However, as indicated above, independent claim 29 has been amended to include all of the limitations of claim 35. In view of the Examiner's indication of the allowability of claim 35, it is respectfully submitted that amended independent claim 29 is clearly patentable over the prior art of record. Further, it is respectfully submitted that claims 31-34, 36-55 and 57 are also in condition for allowance, at least by virtue of their dependency from claim 29.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, it is respectfully submitted that the present application is clearly in condition for allowance. An early notice to that effect is respectfully solicited.

If, after reviewing this Amendment, the Examiner feels there are any issues remaining which must be resolved before the application can be passed to issue, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned by telephone in order to resolve such issues.

Respectfully submitted,

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